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The President's Daily Brief

7 November 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

7 November 1969

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Communist sappers struck two police posts on the outskirts of Saigon this morning. Enemy activity in the delta also increased. (Page 1)

The East German party daily has taken a hard line on East-West German relations. (Page 2)

Podgorny's speech yesterday contained nothing earthshaking. (Page 3)

Nasir yesterday made his most hawkish speech since the six-day war. (Page 4)

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine says it will not be bound by any agreement between Yasir Arafat and the Lebanese. (Page 5)

The Sino-Soviet border talks have not gotten anywhere. (Page 6)

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VIETNAM

Early this morning Communist sappers attacked two police posts on the southwestern outskirts of Saigon, killing two policemen and wounding five others, according to preliminary reports.

This action may represent increased enemy emphasis in the Saigon area, including stepped up sapper and terrorist incidents within the city itself.

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Fighting also increased in the delta, where there were some 72 enemy-initiated incidents the night of 6-7 November.

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EAST - WEST GERMANY

In its first authoritative commentary on East-West German relations since Brandt's statement last week, the East German party daily Neues Deutschland yesterday repudiated Brandt's concept that relations between the two must be of a "special character." Rather, the paper insisted, relations must be "only on the basis of international law," and Bonn must treat East Germany as a sovereign state.

These rigid formulations are similar to the ones used earlier in the year by Ulbricht, and on the surface they leave little room for compromise.

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This latest commentary, however, is not an official government statement and probably does not represent Pankow's last word. It may be designed to pressure the Brandt government to be even more forthcoming.

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the government may be concerned about domestic popular reaction to Brandt's statement. The editorial thus could also be designed to persuade its East German readers that nothing has changed in Bonn.

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At the least, this latest tactical shift underlines the caution with which the East Germans are handling Brandt's statement. We do not expect Brandt to be deterred by the public coolness in Pankow, and in fact we think the East Germans will continue to be more forthcoming in private.

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SOVIET UNION

Yesterday's speech by Soviet President Podgorny marking the 52nd anniversary of the October Revolution was the kind of wide-ranging, nonspecific survey that has generally been a fixture of the occasion. As the Soviets have frequently done recently, Podgorny said that a positive outcome on SALT could lead to Soviet-US progress in other fields. He warned, however, that the USSR "has never allowed and never will allow anybody to speak to it from a position of strength." His choice of words betrayed once again Moscow's sensitivity to US suggestions that the future of the arms talks is linked to other bilateral problems.

Podgorny professed interest in improving relations with the US, but went on with a comprehensive criticism of American foreign policies. Accusing the US of actions which contradict its official statements, Podgorny reiterated standard Soviet claims of Washington's responsibility for the war in Vietnam and tensions in the Middle East. He dismissed President Nixon's speech of 3 November for allegedly failing to show a "sober" approach to ending the war. On the Middle East Podgorny followed the tough line which has characterized Soviet commentary in recent weeks.

A good part of the speech was devoted to Europe and to presenting Moscow's case for the early convening of a security conference. Podgorny claimed that many European states had responded favorably to the idea. He followed this with a discussion of the "successful development" of Soviet relations with France. Podgorny was cautiously positive in his comments on West Germany. Although he said that the USSR would wait for the Brandt government to prove itself by its "practical deeds," he clearly implied that Moscow was hopeful that changes for the better were in prospect.

We see nothing in Podgorny's polemics that deviates significantly from the recent Soviet line, nor did he break any new ground on the positive side. All in all--and not surprisingly, given the occasion--the speech was pretty standard fare.

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EGYPT

Nasir's speech yesterday opening the Egyptian National Assembly session is perhaps the most hawkish he has made since the June 1967 war. Adhering almost solely to the theme of the battle with Israel, he reasserted that "what has been taken by force can only be regained by force" and called on all Arabs to forgo their own rivalries to concentrate on the struggle with the enemy. In this connection he reiterated his call for an Arab summit meeting.

Nasir used the past tense when he talked of the chances for a political settlement, and the speech clearly indicated that he sees little hope for a peaceful solution. "Everything up to this moment has been a lost effort," he said; "there is no longer any way out except to open our own road toward what we want by force."

His remarks clearly named the USSR as the friend of the Arabs and the US as their enemy. He echoed recent charges current in the Middle East that US military personnel are fighting with the Israeli Army.

Nasir's language accurately reflects the pessimism rampant in the Arab world. His words will probably set the tone for the Joint Arab Defense Council meeting in Cairo tomorrow. They doubtless will also be loudly acclaimed by Arab nationalists throughout the Middle East.

In spite of this, Cairo will probably continue to cooperate with the efforts of the big powers and the UN in searching for a political settlement. Egypt's public line, however, will continue to be harsh, both as a reflection of genuine pessimism and as a way to put pressure on Tel Aviv.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

LEBANON

Eric Pace of the New York Times, who talked recently in Amman with officials of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, says he was told that the PFLP does not consider itself bound by any agreement between Yasir Arafat and the Lebanese on fedayeen activity in Lebanon.

The PFLP has always been one of the most intransigent of the fedayeen groups, and its refusal to give Arafat carte blanche is not surprising. As far as we know, however, there are not many PFLP commandos in Lebanon; its militancy in this one case is somewhat academic.

A much more serious question is the attitude of Saiqa, the group associated with the Syrian Baathists. It has not been heard from yet, but it has never been noted for subservience to Arafat. Around half the fedayeen in Lebanon are Saiqa adherents.

Pace also told the US Embassy that the PFLP is planning more airliner hijackings. His contacts specifically mentioned TWA.

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COMMUNIST CHINA - SOVIET UNION

The Soviet-Chinese border negotiations in Peking so far have gone nowhere. The Chinese, worried about the Soviet military buildup on their borders, are pressing hard for a firm preliminary agreement on military disengagement in disputed areas. The Russians, judging that they now hold the military and political advantage, seem reluctant to reach such a tactical accord without broader agreement on specific territorial differences.

The Soviets still profess optimism in their public commentary, but early this week several Russian journalists indicated to US officials that the Soviet delegation was finding the going difficult in Peking.

The Chinese are also beginning to release indirectly their version of the impasse. A Hong Kong newspaper yesterday blamed lack of progress on Moscow's desire to negotiate from a position of strength. The paper strongly reiterated the Chinese contention that an agreement to calm down the frontier must precede negotiations on substantive issues.

Despite these intimations of stalemate, neither side appears to want the talks to fail. Each continues to mute propaganda attacks against the other. According to diplomatic sources in Peking, the top two members of each delegation are meeting privately in an effort to overcome the deadlock.

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NOTES

USSR - Communist China: The Soviets are continuing to give priority treatment to their units on the Chinese border.

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USSR-Cuba: Havana radio announced yesterday that Defense Minister Grechko will "soon" be visiting Cuba at the request of the Cubans. Grechko will be the first high Soviet official to visit the island since Kosygin stopped off on his way home from the UN in 1967. Havana gave no reason for the visit, and there have been no recent reports of difficulties which might have prompted the Cubans to ask him to come. He will, however, doubtless check the Soviet military aid program while he is there.

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